

Pastor's Column

The Resignation of Pope Benedict XVI

An official statement from Bishop Brom, the Bishop of the Diocese of San Diego, can be found elsewhere in the Bulletin.

Jokingly, Kathleen Bell, our Director of Faith Formation, said to me this past Monday, "I guess anyone can give their two week notice." How true!

What are the implications of Pope Benedict's resignation, the first since Pope Gregory XII's resignation in 1415?

Many people would consider Pope Benedict to be conservative and very traditional. Yet, he has done something that is very "un-traditional." He resigned the Papacy, the first papal resignation in almost 600 years.

It reminds me of President Richard Nixon, doing what was then in the early 1970's a very untraditional move—he began to open the door to China, a very radical move for a very conservative and traditional politician.



Pope Benedict's resignation was definitely a "Nixon going to China" move.

In this resignation, the Pope is saying that the mission and ministry of Jesus through the work of the Church, is a communal effort and is more important than any one person, even the Pope himself.

Pope Benedict has now given his future successors a great freedom—the ability to resign when it seems that their own personal health, or possibly other issues, whatever they may be, are creating an inability for the ministry to be done as it needs to be done for that specific era.

Health care is advancing at such a phenomenal rate that people are living longer and longer, but that does not mean that, although living longer, they are able to perform all the necessary requirements in their ministry, in their job.

The Pope's resignation is a sign of that reality. He is to be commended for his willingness "to let go, and let God."

There were many discussions in the last months, and even in the last years of Pope John Paul II's papacy. Many thought he should have resigned because of ill health. I personally agreed with that position.

The debate centered around whether the mission and ministry of Jesus, in and through the Church, were being done, or whether too much attention and energy was centered on the Pope and working to keep him "going." In the meantime, was the ministry of the Church being exercised as it should be?

These questions will never be answered, but I believe Pope Benedict's greatest legacy may be his resignation, his willingness to courageously honor the present situation of his life, and to say that the mission and ministry of Jesus is the most important element, more important than any one person, even the Pope himself.

We pray for our Church during this transition, and we pray knowing that the Holy Spirit will give us the Pope that is needed for this time!



F.A. Mike